THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has set up an Overseas Indian Facilitation Centre (OIFC) as a not-for-profit-Trust in partnership with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). The objective of the Centre is to promote overseas Indian investments in India, facilitating Business-to-Business partnerships between Indian Business and overseas Indians and extend advisory services to PIO's and NRI's on various issues such as Consular questions, stay in India, financial issues, etc. The Centre functions from Delhi only. The OIFC has received 65 applications since it was launched in May, 2007. Since the OIFC functions exclusively for the benefit of overseas Indian community, there is no clash of interest with the programmes of Ministry of Commerce and Industry in promoting foreign investments in the country.

Programme for emigrant workers

2538. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN:
DR. (SHRIMATI) NAJMA A. HEPTULLA:

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a national skill upgradation and pre-departure orientation training programme for emigrant workers was launched in partnership with the States;

(b) if so, the details in this regard;

(c) the number of States participating in this programme;

(d) whether Government would involve some industrial houses and private institutes to make this programme successful; and

(e) if so, the details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (e) A Scheme titled 'Skill upgradation and pre-departure orientation of emigrant workers' was drawn up by this Ministry during 2006-07 and the Scheme was implemented on a pilot basis involving 5 State Governments, *viz.* Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab. During 2007-08, the Ministry intends to enlarge the Scheme in partnership with Ministry of Micro-Small and Medium Enterprises, apex Industry Associations and reputed Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) under Public-Private partnership.

Women deserted by overseas husbands

2539. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:
SHRI B. J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to provide aid to women who are deserted by their overseas husbands;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of the countries where the scheme is proposed to be launched initially?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (c) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs has launched a scheme for giving legal/financial assistance to women deserted/divorced by their overseas Indian spouses. A copy of the scheme is enclosed as Statement (*See* below). The scheme has been initially launched in the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Gulf.

Statement

Scheme for giving legal/financial assistance to women deserted by their overseas Indian spouses.

Objective:

The objective of the scheme is to provide some financial assistance to needy women in distress who have been deserted by, their overseas Indian spouses for obtaining counselling and legal services, The term ''Overseas Indian'' would include NRls and foreign citizens of Indian origin, The counselling and legal services would be provided through credible Indian Women's Organizations/ Indian Community Associations and NGOs identified for providing such services and empanelled with the Indian Missions in the USA, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Gulf. The scheme is a welfare measure to support women of Indian origin in distress, through the mobilization of the local Indian community in the endeavour and with some financial assistance from the Government.

Scope of and Eligibility for the Scheme:

The scheme would be available to the women who have been deserted by their overseas Indian spouses or are facing divorce proceedings in a foreign country subject to the following conditions:

(i) The woman is an Indian passport holder.

(ii) The marriage of the woman has been solemnized in India.

(iii) The woman is deserted in India or after reaching abroad within five years of the marriage.

(iv) Divorce proceedings are initiated within five years of the marriage by her overseas Indian spouse.

(v) An *ex-parte* divorce has been obtained by the overseas Indian spouse within ten years of the marriage and a case for maintenance and alimony is to be filed.

(vi) The scheme would not be available to a woman facing criminal charges or having a criminal case decided against her.

(vii) The domicile of the woman seeking relief under the scheme is not relevant for allowing the benefit. The woman may be domiciled in the

country of her overseas Indian spouse or in India at the time of making the application.

(viii) Preference may be given to applicants on the basis of financial needs.

(ix) Assistance will be limited to meeting initial cost and incidental charges for documentation and filing of the case by the Indian women's organization/NGO on the woman's behalf.

(x) The assistance will be limited to US $1000 per case and will be released to the Indian community organizations/NGO concerned to enable it to take steps to assist the woman in documentation and preparatory work for filing the case.

(xi) The women's organization/NGO will make efforts to enlist community advocates, preferably women advocates, to extend further legal assistance/appearance in court etc on a *pro-bono* basis.

Pattern of Assistance

Under the scheme Indian Missions in the countries concerned would empanel credible Indian Women's Organizations/ Indian Community Associations/NGOs and their member advocates, preferably women, to provide legal aid to the victims in distress and whose names have been approved by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. The applications for providing legal aid received by the Missions would be examined by an officer designated by the Head of the Mission on case-to-case basis and approved by Head of Mission/Deputy Chief of the Mission.

The applications received in the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs will be examined by an internal committee consisting of a legal advisor and an officer of the rank of Director/Deputy Secretary and approved by Secretary. Thereafter, the Ministry will recommend the case to Mission concerned to provide legal aid support. The applicant would also be informed to approach the Mission concerned in this regard.

Financial Grants to Embassies/High Commissions

In the current financial year (2007-08) the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs would initially sanction Rs. 40 lakhs each to the Indian Missions in USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and the Gulf subject to review next year. Thus, in the current financial year the budget provision for this scheme will be Rs. 3.00 crore. The expenditure incurred on the scheme would be debited to the following Budget Head each year.

Major Head Minor Head	:	2061	(External Affairs)
Minor Head	:	00.800	(Other Expenditure)
		03	(Other Schemes)
		03.00.50	(Other Charges)